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New life for ex-extremists

By: A Correspondent **Date:** 2010-11-24 **Place:** Bangalore

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Former militants find a new way of life with spiritual guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's guidance

"My anger has now turned into a smile. Earlier, it was difficult imagining a normal life. Today, after coming to the Art of Living, I am leading a normal life. I feel very good and peaceful." said Amar Singh, a surrendered Manipuri militant.



Lessons of peace: Art Of Living founder Sri Sri Ravishankar interacting with the Manipuri terror suspects during a session

Amar Singh, Jeevan Singh and Bunty Meiti are part of the first Meitie group of 128 militants from KCPMC Lallumba that laid down arms on August 6.

The group was subsequently rehabilitated by undergoing a 90-day intensive spiritual, behavioural and vocational rehabilitation training program organised and conducted by the Art of Living (AOL) and its sister organisation, the International Association for Human Values (IAHV).

The program began on August 16 this year. "Manipur is one of the worst insurgency-affected state in the north-east. We were not merely looking at training them in technical and soft skills, but their complete rehabilitation." said Darshak Hathi, international director.

Based on Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's ideals of 'Inside every criminal, there is a victim crying for help', the rehabilitation program aimed at stress elimination, bringing inner peace, creating centeredness, sensitivity and making them socially responsible citizens.

Alongside, there was a vocational skill development training program by Kohinoor, to impart technical training to the group in computers, mobile-repair, electrical and AC/refrigeration. Evenings were dedicated for cultural programs, satsangs and games.

Today, most of the group is successfully employed in mainstream companies. On August 6, this group was handed over by the government to the AOL for their rehabilitation. They were then brought to the AOL Ashram in Pune where they were provided with full medical aid along with their other daily needs.

Faculty and project director, Samir Jolly, said, "When they were in the army camp, they would escape in spite of the best security cover. Here, they stayed on without any security or boundary walls. Today, the situation is such that they even do not want to pick up the gun."

Over the years, the organisation has been tirelessly working towards bringing peace in war-torn zones around the world. In August this year, a top Maoist leader, Ramendra Singh surrendered before the police in Jharkhand.

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